

**The Shirley Chisholm Project
Brooklyn Women's Activism 1945 to the Present
Archives and Special Collections, Brooklyn College,
City University of New York
Brooklyn, NY**

ROBERT GOTTLIEB
Interviewed by **BARBARA WINSLOW**

Monday, January 15, 2009
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About the Project

The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism is an archive and repository of women's grassroots social activism in Brooklyn since 1945 and ongoing in the present. Named in the spirit of Chisholm's legacy as a path breaking community and political activist, the archive follows the many paths she pioneered, by including materials representing the wide range of women's grassroots activism throughout the borough of Brooklyn. The full archive consists of oral history interviews (conducted by the staff of the project), as well as documents, newsletters, personal letters and various other materials, from people who knew or worked with Chisholm. All materials collected by the SCPBWA are housed in the Archives and Special Collections of the Brooklyn College library. If you are interested in visiting the Archives and Special Collections, please call (718) 951-5346 or visit their website at <http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/archives> for more information.

Notes on the Oral History Interviews

The oral history collection has two components. The first includes interviews with a variety of individuals who knew and worked with Shirley Chisholm—both her friends, colleagues and political allies, as well adversaries—during her time in the New York State Senate (1964-1968), United States Congress (1969-1983) and her 1972 Presidential campaign. The second phase of the project will begin in 2012 and consist of oral history interviews with Brooklyn women activists, from 1945 to the present.

Researchers

Researchers are encouraged to both read the transcript of the oral history interview and view/listen to the recording of the interview. The transcription of the interview is a near verbatim copy of the interview. The SCPBWA has decided—for the sake of clarity—to edit the transcription for the readers understanding. While the interview still contains false starts, verbal stumbles, misspeaks, and repetition, it *has been edited for readability*. It is for this reason we encourage researchers to read the transcript and view/listen to the interview when citing interviews for ones personal, scholarly or academic work. It is acceptable for researchers to utilize excerpts or quotations from this interview and in doing so we recognize that it maybe necessary to correct grammar or punctuation. It is important to note then, the nicknames and shortened names used by the narrators in reference to colleagues, friends, organizations or neighborhoods were not altered in the transcriptions produced by the SCPBWA. Therefore you may see variations of Shirley Chisholm being referred to as “Mrs. C”, Wesley McDonald Holder as “Wes” or “Mac”, Bedford Stuyvesant as “Bed Stuy.” The variations of which names used are specific to the individual narrators.

Abstract: This interview focuses on Robert Gottlieb experiences working with Shirley Chisholm as her Congressional intern in Washington D.C. and on her 1972 Presidential campaign. Gottlieb discusses his experiences

Interview Context

This interview took place in the office of Robert Gottlieb, in the Trinity Building in Manhattan, New York on January 15th, 2009 and lasted approximately 40 minutes. There were some technical difficulty with the video recording and the first few minutes of the interview were not video recorded. However, there is an audio recording available for listening and the transcript documents the entire interview.

Narrator

Robert ‘Bob’ Gottlieb worked in Shirley Chisholm’s Washington D.C Congressional office and on her 1972 Presidential campaign. After completing his sophomore year at Cornell University, he was awarded a scholarship that allowed him to complete a paid Congressional internship with an elected official of his choosing. While working with Chisholm he wrote entries to the Congressional Record on her behalf and worked on various pieces of legislation, such as the Head Start program. He was asked by Mrs. Chisholm to be the Student Coordinator for her 1972 Presidential campaign, following the declaration of her candidacy in January 1972. He accepted and traveled to various college campuses and organized rallies in support of her candidacy. After her working on her Presidential campaign he went onto New York University Law School and is currently a lawyer in New York City and Long Island area.

Interviewer

Barbara Winslow is the founder and Project Director of the Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women’s Activism 1945 to the Present. A historian, Professor Winslow teaches in both the School of Education and the Women's Studies Program at Brooklyn College. She is the author of *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* and coeditor of *Clio in the Classroom: A Guide for Teaching U.S. Women's History* along with Carol Berkin (Editor), Margaret S. Crocco (Editor). She also serves on the Advisory Board of the North Star Fund a foundation serving grassroots activist organizations in New York City and on the Leadership Council of the Organization of American Historians.

Restrictions: None

Format: Recorded, audio and video, by Marwa Amer on one 40 Minute HD DVCAM tapes.

Transcript: Transcribed by Marwa Amer. Edited for clarity by Joyce LeeAnn Joseph and Barbara Winslow. Pending approval by Robert Gottlieb.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms: Please include in your citation, a credit to The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women’s Activism 1945 to the Present and the Brooklyn College Archives and Special Collection.

Barbara Winslow: I am Barbara Winslow of the Brooklyn College School of Education and Women Studies Program. I am recording the memories of Robert Gottlieb about Shirley Chisholm, Brooklyn women's activism and its long-term significance. If you choose to take part in this project, I am going to ask you a series of open-ended questions about your life and memories. The interview may be audio taped, videotaped or both and in this case it's both and the interview will take less than an hour. There are no anticipated benefits to participation and the risks associated with oral history are likewise not known to be significant, however you can withdraw from the interview at any time without prejudice prior to the execution and delivery of the deed of gift. You will also have the opportunity to make special provisions or restrictions in the deed of gift. During the interview you may request to stop the recording at any time to discuss or clarify how you wish to respond to a question or topic before proceeding. In the event you choose to withdraw during the interview any tape made of the interview will either be given to you or destroyed. Do you Robert Gottlieb understand this?

Robert Gottlieb: Sure do.

Winslow: Okay. Briefly can you tell us something about yourself, excuse me first please state your name for the record and give a brief biological sketch of your life?

Gottlieb: Robert Gottlieb. And I am presently a criminal defense attorney here in New York City. I grew up on Long Island and went to Cornell Undergrad and NYU (New York University) Law School. And following law school I served as prosecutor and Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan and I have been in private practice for many, many years now.

Winslow: And how did you get to know Shirley Chisholm?

Gottlieb: After the sophomore year at Cornell I applied for a scholarship that was named after a California member of Congress who had died. And the recipient of the scholarship was given a stipend to work for any member of the Senate or the House, who would have him or her during the next summer as a student intern, as a Congressional intern. I applied for the scholarship during my sophomore year. I was awarded the stipend and I then had a choice, I could have applied to any member of Congress, any Senator and they were not going to have to pay me. I was going to receive the scholarship. There were only two people I was interested in working for. One was Allard Lowenstein, and Allard Lowenstein of course who was at the forefront of the anti-war movement and the dump (Lyndon B.) Johnson campaign. And the other person who I was interested in working for was Shirley Chisholm. She had not yet been entrenched in Congress, but she was a new face and somebody who struck me as a real firebrand, an independent thinker, and was willing to take on the forces of evil. So I applied to both of them and I was given the okay by both Lowenstein and Chisholm and I decided to go with Chisholm.

Winslow: You must have been her first intern?

Gottlieb: I bet I was. I bet I was. And so what happened that summer, I then spent the summer in her Congressional office and worked with all of her Washington staff. Shirley Downes I recall was the Legislative Assistant, Thad (Thaddeus) Garret was her-I believe he was the Legislative Assistant and Downes was an Administrative Assistant. Carolyn Smith I recall was the receptionist/secretary who really ran the office and I became very friendly with all of them and worked day in and day out with Mrs. C. That's how I always spoke and addressed her, she wasn't Congresswoman Chisholm or Mrs.

Chisholm; to the people working with her it was Mrs. C. And I would travel with her when she gave a speech out of town to Virginia or Maryland, I would go to committee meetings, I wrote entries to the Congressional Record on her behalf. I remember they were setting up-they were unveiling a statue to Mary McLeod Bethune an African leader in Washington D.C. And they were erecting a statue, so I remember having to do the research about Mary McLeod Bethune to submit Shirley Chisholm's comments in the Congressional Record. And I remembered it as if it happened yesterday, the day the Congressional Record came out for those days proceedings-the previous days proceedings and there were the comments of the Representative from Brooklyn, Shirley Chisholm and I knew I had a role in writing this. And it was like, it was like being the author of the *Bible*, this was the biggest thing that could have ever happened. I was going into my senior year at college and it just was a great moment.

Winslow: Do you remember what legislation she was working on?

Gottlieb: Head Start. I remember that summer we spent a lot of time on education, Head Start, thinking back that's what the focus of my attention was. I did a lot of constituent service also, people writing complaints, and problems back home. So I dealt with various agencies, but Head Start and the Education Bill funding for day care and also legal services. Legal Services for the poor-the Legal Services Corporation, I think that's what it was called was being set up and I remember spending time on that as well.

Winslow: In Shola's film she makes a great deal and everybody does, that she turned down her first committee assignment. Do you remember what committee's she was on? She must have been on more than one? She was on Veterans I know.

Gottlieb: And eventually she got assigned to the Education Committee, but that was what brought her to my attention, as well as obviously the nation's attention. When she was first elected she was assigned to the Agriculture Committee. She was a former teacher; she came from a very poor area in Brooklyn, representing predominantly African Americans. This firebrand, somebody who is going to fight for social justice, is now appointed as one of her first assignments to the Agricultural Committee and the battle that she was willing to wage against the powers that be—including the Speaker of the House of Representatives—that how do you assign somebody like Shirley Chisholm to the Agricultural Committee? There aren't a lot of farms in Brooklyn, in Bed Stuy. So the attention she got in saying she is not going to accept that and the stories I heard afterwards, that everyone told her, "You got to play the game." "You can't do it that way." "Don't ruffle the leaderships feathers, in due time you'll get the committee assignments that are more in tune to your needs." And she made it clear, she was elected to serve her constituents, she did not represent the farm belt and she won. She got appointed to the Education Committee as a result of that battle and she was really one of the first to show that streak of independence, but not only to show that streak of independence, but to win. It's easy to just mouth off and to protest.

Winslow: Why do you think she won? Do you think it was because she was the first black woman elected? You are pretty entrenched I assume?

Gottlieb: This was my impression of Shirley Chisholm after the Congressional internship, she was outspoken she was willing to take on the big boys, but she also understood the game. She was a consummate politician. The public back then I think saw her simply as a radical, feminist, black woman, they were scared stiff of her. It

became striking to me then spending time with her in Congress that summer—and I'm just, I'm 21 years old—that behind the scenes she was able to play the guys, she knew how to talk to them, in private she didn't come across just as a radical bomb thrower. She understood trading off, so I think—I wasn't there when she waged the war to get onto the Education Committee—but having seen her work I have no doubt that she met with the Speaker, met with the other power brokers, leadership and made it clear that she understood the game and that she was willing in the future to consider giving them this, if they would give her that. And they realizing that she may not be as dangerous as they feared, plus the fact that she was such a symbol immediately being a black woman. I think it's probably a combination of her own abilities and her political savvy, plus who she was that all came together to make it almost untenable for them not to buckle.

Winslow: I'd like to talk a little bit about how the issue of gender played a role. You know there is the famous quote that she always talked about, being a woman was more difficult than being African American, and a number of the people talked about how terribly her colleagues in the House treated her. Is that true?

Gottlieb: I remember being in her inner office and also being in cars taking trips with her, where I was struck by her comments more than once that there was more of a barrier being a woman, than being a black Representative. That's not to say that her race didn't present enormous obstacles for her, back then the Black Caucus was very small, I don't remember the number, but it was only a handful of Representatives who were African American.

Winslow: And they all were men.

Gottlieb: And they were all men. And there were enormous tensions between the group of men and Shirley Chisholm that certainly came to a head further down the road when she ran for President. But I didn't see it personally. I didn't see the sexist slights, but she often expressed that when she, at the end of the day, when she was just speaking freely.

Winslow: Bevan Dufty told us, he was her congressional intern after her Presidential run. And Bevan told us that she wouldn't take any junkets because of the way the men were treating her, you know the trip to look at trade in Munich or something like that.

RG: That doesn't surprise me, but I also—and again I never discussed it with her—but she had such an inner strength and moral compass. She knew damn well that these junkets are just what that means; they were just taking these side trips off the taxpayers' money. And I can almost hear her saying if we have money to go to this far away land and stay at some nice hotel, how come we don't have money for health care or education for the poor? So I don't know, but I am willing to bet that her decision not to take junkets had more to do with the way people would treat her, as much as she knew that this just isn't the way it's supposed to be.

Winslow: Where did she live in Washington? Do you remember?

Gottlieb: She had a small apartment, if I recall. I was never there.

Winslow: Did Conrad come with her?

Gottlieb: Conrad was at home, back in Brooklyn.

Winslow: How often did she go back to Brooklyn?

Gottlieb: She made that trip back to Brooklyn; I am willing to bet every weekend.

Winslow: And did she fly, do you know?

Gottlieb: Yes, I think it was the Eastern Airline shuttle.

Winslow: Did she have a lot of constituents come to her office?

Gottlieb: Oh there's always...in every congressional office people are always stopping in, there was always a hubbub in her office, people were always stopping in. And again she was such a symbol, people were just so proud to be there, most often minorities. To be able to be there with Shirley Chisholm and have a picture taken with her if she was available. And she would be in her inner office and she would say-Carolyn Smith would say some people are here, you know a school or somebody, and they would like to say hello. And it would interfere obviously with the work that she was doing, but she would always make time for them. And as tired as she would have been, once people were in her office and she had to speak to them, they would never ever get a sense that she was in a rush or that this was just one of those burdens that comes with being a member of Congress. She gave them full attention; she was always interested in them, especially young people. She would come alive and it would invigorate her to do the work that she had to do in having contact with normal folk.

Winslow: Just a couple things, I know she was always well dressed. How did that strike you as a young man in the sixties?

Gottlieb: That's a great question because again I am at Cornell and all hell is breaking loose in this country. Everybody was dressing down, you know we were all wearing bellbottoms and jeans and looking as if we were all homeless. And Shirley Chisholm, based on what I knew of her was really one of us. She was fighting the good fight, she was going to stop the war, and she was going to eradicate racism, so she had to look like me and the other women who I knew from Cornell. And I do remember being struck by how well dressed she was—always groomed immaculately—but that goes back to what I

was saying before, she understood that it takes more than just opening your mouth to affect change. There is a role for people who are just rabble-rousers and are going to scream and yell, I don't for a moment minimize the importance of that group, that type of person to affect real change in this country. But to go from that step, somebody who is willing to point out the problems and to say we're not going to take it anymore and then to go into the halls of Congress to affect legislative change, you need somebody to translate the need for change to the people, who over their dead bodies, will actually change unless they are forced to change. So you need that Representative who looks like them, who can speak their language. Now while Shirley Chisholm certainly didn't look like them entirely, being so well dressed and being so professional and being so eloquent, she disarmed people. And it made it I think easier for her to accomplish whatever she was able to accomplish.

Winslow: Did she read a lot? Other than newspapers? I mean, I know that she prided herself on her intellect and I wondered if you ever saw her just reading up or saying to you, "I need to get some research on such and such?"

Gottlieb: The directions for research would always come from Shirley Downes, her Administrative Assistant. I have no recollection of Shirley Chisholm researching or reading independently of the newspapers of current events. You know during the day from the time you're in the office until the end of the day, its running around to committee meetings, as you're running down the hallways she's reading some memo that a staff member put together about what the hearing or the statue, proposed legislation was all about. She gobbled that up, she never just went in and BS (bull shit) her way through a hearing, she knew what was being discussed and what the bill really stood for. But a lot

of that I always thought was really the credit of a very good staff in Washington and any member of Congress has to rely on a good staff, but of course they also have to be willing to read the stuff. She certainly spent her moments boning up for any of the hearings.

Winslow: I was also just thinking in terms of, did you get a sense that when she got home she would read novels or when she was on a plane she read just the way people read who are interested.

RG: I don't have that sense at all.

Winslow: Did she ever talk to you about her marriage to Conrad?

Gottlieb: It was always very positive—the answer is yes. She would frequently bring up Conrad's name and I found it very endearing. I always felt it was real heartfelt. The separation was unbelievable, physical separation is—he was not one of the spouses who just came down to Washington to live. He stayed in Brooklyn so I knew that there was—it makes it almost an impossible way to be married. But she often commented positively and with expressions of love toward Conrad. I think I met him twice though.

Winslow: Yeah, he never came to Washington?

RG: No.

Winslow: I believe there was a Women's Caucus, as well as a Congressional Black Caucus, did she ever discuss because when she was in Congress—she was in Congress with Bella Abzug, Patsy Mink, Edith Griffith I believe from Michigan. I mean there were a group of really high-powered women in Congress and when Pat Schroeder came to Brooklyn I said, "There had to be tension all these women had egos?" And she said "No, because there was so few of them." I just wondered if you had a different perspective.

Gottlieb: I never sensed the-the Women's Caucus to be comparable to the Black Congressional Caucus in being of power during that period of time. I do recall it existing in name, but it's just so deep in the recesses that it just was not active. What I do recall very clearly is Chisholm speaking about Bella Abzug and she got a real charge with Abzug because Abzug was bigger than life. And she was a character, and she wore the big hats, and she spoke with a booming voice, and I do recall Chisholm chuckling about Abzug. You know to things like, "Did you hear what Bella said today." And she would mimic. She was great at mimicking individuals from you know the southern gentlemen in Congress or Bella Abzug, so she was very playful behind the scenes in dealing with her colleagues.

Winslow: Lets get onto the Presidential Election; you were not working for her at the time. So what were you doing in '72 then?

Gottlieb: This is what happens. The summer of '71 comes to an end—that's when I served as an intern—I went back to start my senior year at Cornell. And you take your semester break around Christmas. And I recall saying I want go back down to Washington just to say hello to my friends in Chisholm's office and of course to say hello to her. So I went down to Washington and I remember seeing all the members of the staff and it was just very nice just to go back to an office you know. And soon after arriving I do recall her saying she'd like to speak to me in her office and you know still I'm a young guy, you know she's a member of Congress, your heart goes all a flutter and I am going inside the inner sanctum of a member of Congress, somebody who I really do respect. And she sat down, in her accent and her lisp and her very strange way of speaking. She told me "There is something that she wanted me to know that she was

going to run for President.” And I can say I didn’t expect something like that and then she said and “I would love for you to help me and serve as my National Student Coordinator.” So the answer—even without me checking with anybody, including my parents—you got to remember I am around 21 years old my parents still have some power over me. At least they thought. And I-but I also had Cornell because I had to graduate, that was the year I was going to graduate. I remember leaving her office and immediately, I think I first I called my girlfriend—who was still back at Cornell and who is now my wife. I spoke to my parents and then I was on the phone with Cornell and spoke to the people I knew at Cornell. And I was already on the Cornell Board of Trustee’s, what happened is that Cornell in 19...I started in 1968 in 1969 Black students took over the student union. They occupied it they came out with guns; it was on the front-page headlines throughout the entire nation. Cornell went through a tremendous upheaval both with Black students, over the Women Studies program and as a result of everything that was going on, including of course over the national problems with Vietnam. We forced the Cornell administration to allow four students to be elected to the Board of Trustees, which just was not being done anywhere in the universe and that became part of the negotiations. And not only voting members, but we insisted that one of the four had to be appointed to the Executive Committee, which is where all the power is on a Board of Trustee’s. And I was the Executive Committee member; I was elected to the Board of Trustee’s. I was assigned to the Executive Committee and that’s where I was sitting at the time. I am now calling Cornell and saying listen, I know I am still on the Board, I’m a student, but I need to take this next semester off. And why? You know, I am going to work for Shirley Chisholm’s campaign for President and within hours I

worked out receiving 9 credits, I needed 12 credits to graduate, I received 9 credits independent study for working on the campaign with the understanding that I had to take one course at G.W. (George Washington University) in Washington and write a paper about my experiences. So before I left Washington to go and pack up back in Ithaca, at Cornell I had received approval to take my last semester off.

Winslow: What was your major?

Gottlieb: I was in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. And I then took that course- an evening course at G.W., my attendance was unacceptable looking at it today, but I did write a paper and I did pass and I did graduate on time. But starting in January I lived in Washington, my brother was in law school in Washington, at G.W. Law School and I lived with him while I worked with Shirley Chisholm.

Winslow: And what did you do as the Student Coordinator?

Gottlieb: Well the primary job was to organize students throughout the country in primary states. So after being briefed and organizing the campaign because the campaign staff was just being geared up and organized, and you think people, now campaigns start four years ahead of time and they start raising money four years ahead of time. We're talking about maybe four months lead time here, so in January things were just being developed for an election that's going to take place in November. So we got a campaign office, we hired other people, everyone was young. And we started writing legislative position papers. Marion Humphrey I remember was an African American student from Arkansas who Mrs. Chisholm relied on a great deal to do her speech writing. I don't know where Marion is these days—I'd love to see him. And I then would travel to the primary states and go from campus to campus.

Winslow: Describe one college or another?

Gottlieb: I'll tell you the first trip. The first trip was to go to North Carolina. And I waited until we got the bumper stickers printed and the leaflets printed and I was going to go to a college in North Carolina—I think Raleigh. And I flew down to Raleigh. I get off the plane. I go to the luggage carousel to pick up my luggage, plus the box of bumper stickers and you know when you order printing always on the outside there is a sample of what's inside. So I am picking up this big box of Chisholm bumper stickers and on the outside is "Shirley Chisholm for President." So I am at the carousel waiting for it to come around, I see the boxes come around, I take the box off the carousel and written all over the box is "Go home nigger." That's my first trip, my first...the beginning of my time on the Chisholm trail and I remember that really for the first time because I hadn't thought about it before that, said to me "whoa" this may be more serious than I thought.

Winslow: Sorry to interrupt, but I am assuming Jewish going into the South?

Gottlieb: Yeah, it suddenly struck me that this is not going to be what you would expect reading the history books working on a Presidential campaign.

Winslow: Tell us what you did on a campus?

Gottlieb: So I would have made contact with somebody on the campus who might have been in touch with the Chisholm campaign showing some interest. And I would say listen, this is what I would like to do, I would like to meet with you, get together a bunch of people. Because if we get enough interest there, I will arrange for Mrs. C to come down and speak because we needed rallies in all of the primary states. So I would meet with them and if there was some interest, if we thought we could arrange a rally for her I would then be in touch with the campaign staff back in D.C.; and would try to convince

them to arrange a trip to North Carolina, to Florida, to Wisconsin, to New York, to California. Remember not all the states had these types of open primaries back then, so those were the states I recall spending most of my time. Most of my time in fact was spent in Florida, for the Florida primary, but my first trip was to North Carolina and that's what I would do, I would go down there I would arrange it ahead of time. I would almost be an advanced person once we knew there was going to be a rally. I would then meet Mrs. C when she would come down for the trip that she was taking in that particular state. I would then be with her from the time she arrived, until the time she was ready to get back on the plane and go back somewhere else.

Winslow: Do you remember any of the colleges in Florida, like the University of Miami?

Gottlieb: I remember the University of Miami because it was the first time I ever saw a college with so many outdoor swimming pools. Now I am a student at Cornell, where you don't see sun from October until April and it's always raining or snowing. So I remember going to the University of Miami and seeing everyone studying in their bathing suits around colleges and that's when I knew I had been doing something wrong all these years. (Laughter) But I was at Miami and then I went to colleges in Jacksonville a lot of the A & M schools—that's what I recall in Florida.

Winslow: And even though she didn't do as well as Barack Obama, Bill Howard said and a number of people have said the campaign that most resembled hers was Obama's. Would you comment on that?

Gottlieb: Well it was real grassroots. Now grassroots is often used these days to describe a campaign that doesn't have any money. And that's until Barack Obama that's really what it signified. And I think Obama's campaign also was grassroots, but they

tapped into the whole Internet and were able to make this grassroots very lucrative also. Shirley Chisholm's campaign never saw money. I would organize not only the-at the colleges, but local communities and we would pass the bucket at the end for donations or it would be a potluck dinner. You know which, I had always been taught-instructed by my parents; you don't just eat someone's food unless you know who cooked it and where it was cooked. And I am going around to these places where everyone is bringing in casseroles and it took...I had to really be hungry in order to eat. (Laughter) And we raised money really we're talking about dollars at a time, but the rallies this is what was striking about it, I always said and I have always felt that if enough people saw Shirley Chisholm she would have been elected. If you saw her in person and realized that she wasn't the devil and that just as Barack Obama was able to do, is to transcend the race because of the message and the way he presented himself. Shirley Chisholm could have done that more successfully than she did. Its not to say that in '72 this country was remotely close to giving her a majority of the vote, but she would have been more successful vote wise and financially if more people actually saw her one on one. Because there was an excitement, people who would go to a campaign stop and be skeptical, by the time she was finished speaking they were already ready to join.

Winslow: Did you go to the convention?

Gottlieb: Yeah.

Winslow: And can you tell us about it?

Gottlieb: By then the campaign was really in disarray, her original campaign manager, I remember was just a big guy somebody who I had arguments with. And the one thing about the campaign is more than once, when there was tension, I did receive some

comments from—even people in the higher ups of the campaign—about being a white guy and how could I really understand. It would never come from Shirley Chisholm, she would have never even have thought it. But some of the political operatives more than once said that and there were times when there was that sort of tension, where I felt that that tension, but that also could be because I was just you know very young and inexperienced—maybe overly sensitive. I realized that, but there was that sort of tension every once in a while. By the time we went to the convention we really knew we did not have a lot of delegate strength. We were not going to be the power brokers. We did not have enough delegates to say to Mc Govern “We want this done or else we’re not going to give you our delegates” because nobody really gave a good goddamn what Shirley was going to do with her delegates. And I remember being-I was the representative to go to meetings in some private suites with the campaign representatives for McGovern, and Scoop Jackson, and Lindsay all these other people who were Presidential aspirants. And being Shirley Chisholm’s representative in the cigar smoke-filled back room. And I am sitting there with guys like Frank Mankiewicz, who then went on—who had been Bobby Kennedy’s right hand man, he was the gentleman who actually announced that Bobby had died, had passed away. Frank Mankiewicz I think at that point was McGovern’s representative and I am at these meetings, in suites where they’re talking about how we’re going to handle the convention, and I am saying to myself “What the hell am I doing here?” I have nothing to say. And it’s funny; none of them asked me “So Bob what do you think?” No, (laughter) but it allowed me to see how it operated and it was just terribly exciting. Just from a personal view it was exciting, but I knew that we were

not going to have the satisfaction of accomplishing what Shirley Chisholm really wanted to accomplish, which was to be a power broker at the convention.

Winslow: And in Shola's movie you get a sense that she was really quite disappointed, is a polite way of putting it with Dellums?

Gottlieb: Well sure because we all thought Dellums was going to be the point man to the end and I remember hearing that that had fallen through. So it just permeated everything down there, that she was disappointed. It wasn't exciting beyond just being there for somebody like me, but for Shirley Chisholm it was not an exciting few days.

Winslow: What do you think for her was the impact of Dellums and not being as successful at the Convention in terms of legislatively the next few years?

Gottlieb: I think the Presidential campaign ended her political career. The Presidential campaign I think extinguished the fire in the belly. That any member of Congress who wants to actually accomplish something and certainly any radical reform minded individual, you must have a fire that rages so strong because there are so many forces against you, and the fire is going to be doused if you let it. And the Presidential campaign took so much out of her physically, mentally, financially. And then the personal disappointments that she suffered at the hands of the men in the Black Congressional Caucus, people who she thought would be more supportive and who she often said they were not supporting her. Whether it's a John Conyers, who I recall very clearly being the focus of many of her comments that she was-felt betrayed. To Ron Dellums at the convention itself much further down the road. I think it just took the stuffing out of her and I don't think she truly ever recovered from the campaign.

Winslow: And you, after the campaign was over did you continue a relationship with Mrs. Chisholm?

Gottlieb: For the next year or so maybe even a little bit further, I would stay in touch with her. I don't recall ever going back to Washington and seeing her, but I did speak to her more than once. But following the campaign there was no real personal connection, but that's also Shirley Chisholm. You know even when I would describe my relationship with her when I was an intern as being close; she never really let her guard down entirely. I don't think she really let it down with anybody, perhaps other than with Conrad or her closest personal friends. But with the people she worked with who worked tirelessly with her day in and day out with her, I never got a sense that anyone had a real personal friendship with her, she just wasn't that sort of individual. Her being, her life began and ended with the battles that she waged.

Winslow: And as the last question, a comment on what you see as her legacy because people are getting interested in her again? Younger scholars are writing about her, Shola did the movie.

Gottlieb: Shirley Chisholm represents to me, the need that when you see something is wrong you need somebody to expose the truth. And to expose it in a way so that there is some chance that change can be affected. So without being trite about it, Barack Obama is part of that legacy because from Shirley Chisholm look at the African American leaders—the reform minded leaders. We have gone through a transformation. We had the Black Panther Party; we had violence even before that, but even after. We had Jesse Jackson who still was perceived to be an outsider trying to affect change, where everything that he was fighting for always seemed to come back to race, but in order to

get beyond that you needed somebody on the inside who understood politics, that was Shirley Chisholm. She understood that. She tried to get beyond race; even though she knew often times it all came back to race. Somebody like Barack Obama owes his election to the early work of Shirley Chisholm.

Winslow: Thank you very much.

Gottlieb: Thank you.